



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

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Federal Jury Convicts Seven Trinidadian Nationals of Hostage-Taking Resulting in the Death of a U.S. Citizen

WASHINGTON - Seven Trinidadian nationals have been found guilty of hostage-taking resulting in the 2005 death of U.S. citizen Balram Maharaj, Acting U.S. Attorney Channing Phillips and Michael J. Folmar, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Miami Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, announced today.

The Trinidadian defendants were found guilty today after a ten-week jury trial before the Honorable John D. Bates in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The defendants face a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of release under the hostage-taking statute. A sentencing date has not yet been set. The convicted Trinidadian nationals included Wayne Pierre, also known as "Ninja," Kevin Nixon, also known as "Shaka," Christopher Sealey, also known as Christopher Bourne and "Boyie," and Anderson Straker, also known as "Gypsy's Son," Ricardo De Four, Zion Clarke, and Kevon Demerieux, also known as "Ketchit.

According to evidence presented at trial, in April 2005, the victim, Balram Maharaj, a naturalized American citizen of Trinidadian heritage, returned to his native country to visit his family. On April 6, 2005, Maharaj was seized by armed gunmen as he sat relaxing at a bar. Maharaj, 61, suffered from poor health and was held hostage under very harsh conditions. He was deprived of essential medications, while his abductors demanded ransom from his family for his release. Maharaj died in captivity, and his dismembered and badly decomposed body was located by authorities in a remote area of Trinidad on January 8, 2006.

In announcing today's convictions, Acting U.S. Attorney Phillips and Acting FBI Special Agent in Charge Folmar praised the hard work of the FBI's Miami Division Extra-territorial Squad, in particular the lead investigative agents, William Clauss, Edgar Cruz and Kenith Jett, along with FBI Forensic Odontologist Scott Hahn, the FBI Evidence Response Team, and FBI Agent Marvin Freeman, formerly the Assistant Legal Attaché in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. They also commended the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Anti- Kidnaping Squad and Homicide

Bureau, in particular Commissioner of Police James Philbert, Acting Superintendent Wayne Boyd, Inspector Johnny Abraham, Sergeant Wendell Lucas, Sergeant Michael Seales, Detective Corporal Eric Park, and Detective Constables Kendell Abraham, Marvin Pinder, Larry Lodhar, Montgomery Trotman and Phillip Forbes. Also praised were the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of the Attorney General, the Acting Director of Public Prosecutions in Trinidad and Tobago, Carla Brown-Antoine, the staff of the U.S. Consulate and U.S. Embassy in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and Jeffrey Olson, Trial Attorney, Department of Justice, Office of International Affairs. Finally, they praised paralegal specialist Jeannette Fennell, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Bruce R. Hegyi and Emily A. Miller, who investigated and prosecuted the case.

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